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Judicial Council Releases Online Court Statistics Report

San Francisco—California superior court filings rose 3 percent in 2003–2004 to over 8.8 million, and records of appeal and original proceedings in the state Courts of Appeal rose by 4 percent, the highest total in three fiscal years, according to the Judicial Council's *2005 Court Statistics Report*.

The *Court Statistics Report* provides detailed statewide caseload data for fiscal year 2003–2004 as well as 10-year trend data on a wide range of court business. Comprehensive individual county data also are published in the online version of the report, posted on the California Courts Web site at http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/3_stats.htm.

The report is prepared by the Administrative Office of the Courts pursuant to the provisions of article VI, section 6 of the California Constitution, which requires the Judicial Council to survey the condition of business in the state courts and to report and make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature.

The statistical report is a companion to the Judicial Council's annual report, which highlights judicial branch programs to improve public access, fairness, and accountability in court administration. The annual report for 2004 will be published later this summer.

This and prior years' *Court Statistics Reports* and annual reports are available online at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/. Printed copies can be obtained by calling the California Courts Infoline at 800-900-5980.

A summary of the principal findings in this report follows:

Supreme Court

- The state's high court recorded 8,564 filings, a slight decrease (3

(over)

- percent) from the previous year.
- Total dispositions fell 1 percent to 8,565.
 - The court filed 14 automatic appeals arising out of judgments of death, a decrease of 30 percent. Dispositions of automatic appeals dropped from 27 to 22, still the second highest yearly total in the past 10 years.
 - Filings of petitions for habeas corpus arising out of related automatic appeals decreased to 47 from the record 59 filings in the previous fiscal year. Dispositions of such matters increased by 30 percent to 35 during the same period.
 - Petitions for review arising out of petitions for habeas corpus filed in the Court of Appeal increased by 35 percent. Original petitions for habeas corpus relief in noncapital cases filed in the Supreme Court essentially stayed the same at 2,748, compared with 2,752 in the previous fiscal year.
 - The Supreme Court ordered 21 Court of Appeal opinions depublished, an increase of 4 from the previous year but still the second lowest number of depublications in more than 20 years.

Courts of Appeal

- A total of 22,824 records of appeal and original proceedings were filed, an increase of 4 percent over the previous year and the highest total in three fiscal years.
- Filings of records of appeal increased by 7 percent to 14,340, an upward trend largely responsible for the increase in total appeal filings noted above.
- Total filings of original civil proceedings fell 10 percent; however, criminal proceedings increased by 3 percent and juvenile rose by 4 percent.
- Dispositions by written opinion declined by 4 percent to 11,992, with opinions decreasing in both appeals and original proceedings. Among cases disposed of by written opinion, the proportion of cases affirmed declined by 1 percent to 85 percent, case reversals increased by 1 percent to 12 percent, and cases dismissed rose by 1 percent to 3 percent from the previous year.
- Statewide, 8 percent of Court of Appeal majority opinions were published in 2003–2004, an increase of 1 percent over the previous year.

Superior Courts

- Total superior court filings rose by nearly 250,000 to 8,823,065, a 3 percent increase over the previous year. Total dispositions rose by less than 1 percent to 7,286,311.
- Civil case filings declined by 4 percent to a total of 1,480,346, while total civil dispositions declined by 5 percent to 1,305,195.
- Criminal case filings grew by 5 percent to a total of 7,189,583, while criminal dispositions increased by a more modest 2 percent to a total of 5,848,838.
- Juvenile delinquency filings were stable, with less than a 1 percent change from the previous year.
- Juvenile dependency filings decreased by approximately 6 percent. Dispositions also declined by 12 percent during this period.
- Civil case processing time remained largely the same. During this period, 64 percent of civil unlimited cases and 86 percent of limited civil cases were disposed within 12 months, and 91 percent and 96 percent of these case types, respectively, were disposed in 24 months.
- Criminal case processing time improved slightly, with 91 percent of all felonies disposed in less than 12 months and 91 percent of all misdemeanors disposed in less than 120 days.

The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.

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